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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - UN Summit

Katrina

PARIS - Wednesday, September 14, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

UN Summit

Katrina

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The UN Summit is one of today's major stories eliciting wide coverage as well as numerous editorial commentaries. Liberation headlines "At the UN, All Bets Are Off" while the report from New York is titled "The United States Prefer a Disunited Nations." In his editorial Gerard Dupuy emphasizes the UN's usefulness as a "buffer between nations" having kept "conflicts from developing between member nations." Dupuy, like Pierre Rousselin in Le Figaro, points to the responsibility of "stingy nations" happy to use "Bush as a scapegoat." Rousselin in Le Figaro underscores the "triumph of conservatism" and Daniel Vernet in Le Monde analyzes the UN Summit in a report titled: "UN Reform, Indispensable and Impossible." (See Part C)

The second major international story today is Katrina and President Bush's statement taking responsibility for his administration's failings. France Soir selects his remarks as the sentence of the day, while Liberation reports on a "small 'mea culpa'." The economic press and Le Monde report on the high costs of the tragedy for insurance companies. Le Monde headlines: "Katrina: The Most Costly Hurricane in History for Insurers."

Le Monde interviews NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on Afghanistan: "The NATO mission in Afghanistan will need to be included in a wider international mission. but it is up to the UN to reflect upon the global action that needs to be carried out in Afghanistan. Drugs are the number one problem in the country, a problem that affects not only the country but the western world as well. There is a need for a single joint mission with the U.S. military, with a single structure of command and a single definition of the rules of engagement."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

UN Summit

"UN: Triumph of Conservatism"

Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/14): "The principle obstacle to the UN reforms are the 191 members themselves. In this age of globalization. the ills affecting us all have taken on a worldwide dimension. The UN is increasingly becoming indispensable. The UN is first and foremost the guarantor of international legitimacy. We must grant the UN uncontested representation. But this is easier said than done. If reforming the UNSC appears stalled, it is because its members have only one obsession: keeping their rivals away. No one will admit it, but this triumph of conservatism sits well with the five UNSC members, including France and the U.S. For Washington, the UN reform was acceptable only if it fit with its own interests. The summit will end with a very disappointing conclusion. These difficulties prove to what extent the international community is divided because of national interests. But the anticipated failure at the summit may be explained by the excessive ambition of the reforms proposed. Maybe the answer lies in gradual reforms that will progressively confer effectiveness to a diplomatic institution which is irreplaceable."

"Selfishness"

Gerard Dupuy in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/14): "What's the use of the UN? Not much according to Bush, who is suspected, with reason, of wanting to sabotage it. Others say that at least the UN serves to annoy Bush. The UN, which is indeed dysfunctional, reflects in fact the position of its members and their selfishness. Yet the UN, lame as it is, has helped in keeping war between its members at bay, which is the main reason for its creation. The UN as buffer does not cost that much when one thinks of its usefulness. After having served

international peace, the UN is now invested with the mission of serving development and worldwide prosperity. The UN progresses slowly. But it progresses despite Bush, who sooner or later will be left by the side of the road and in spite of those who use him as a scapegoat to serve their own stingingness."

"UN Reform: Indispensable and Impossible"

Daniel Vernet in left-of-center Le Monde (09/14): "For the sake of effectiveness, the U.S. does not want an enlarged UNSC. For the sake of legitimacy, the Bush administration does not want to depend on an institution where non-democratic countries have a seat. Without regard for universalism, the U.S. would prefer a union of democracies. The Americans do not want the death of the UN. They want an organization that will not hinder them, and in this regard today's UN is not so bad. While they have criticized Annan, they are pretty well satisfied with a Secretary General who is weakened. There is no reason for them not to ratify the final declaration. After all, interpretation and implementation of the text will depend on the UNSC, where U.S. power remains intact."

Katrina

"A Momentary Breakdown"

Right-of-center Les Echos's editorial board comments (09/14): "In the face of Katrina's huge destruction, America was for a time in the grips of a temporary breakdown. The gap between high-tech simulation and real-time human response became apparent. The social ills of the nation were also made apparent. The obvious shortcomings of the federal government, added to President Bush's initial and prolonged lack of focus have fueled political controversies. And finally, the difficulty in mobilizing sufficient personnel has cast doubt on the resources of the nation, which are reputed to be bottomless. But to those who are eager to give lessons, we say that nature does not inflict the same harsh treatment to our tempered regions. We must not be surprised in the hardened attitude of American society to the tragedy: it is its usual attitude in day-to-day events. It is probably this hard approach which explains the extraordinary performances of the U.S. economy, even at the cost of these failures. After these initial and spectacular failings America will know how to re-organize itself. If its administration learned some measure of humility on the way, all would not be lost." STAPLETON